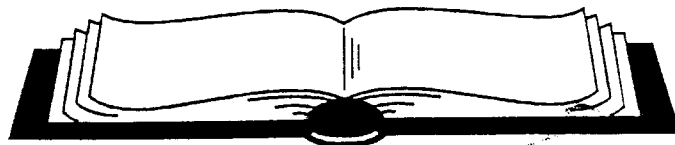


NEW JERSEY

1999-2000

Guidelines and
Application

BEST

ORIGINAL

PRACTICES

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 22, 1999

Category	Public Engagement	(Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	Connections: Mentoring Students Through School/Community	
Number of Schools with Practice	1	Partnerships (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	Burlington County		
District (Proper Name)	Bordentown Regional	School District	
District Address	48 Dunns Mill Road		
	street/p. o. box	08505	
	Bordentown, N.J.	city zip code	
District Telephone	(609) 298-3041	Fax (609) 298-2515	Email
Chief School Administrator	John Polomano		
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)			
School Address	Clara Barton School		
	street/p. o. box	100 Crosswicks Street	
	city	Bordentown, N.J.	08505 zip code
School Telephone	(609) 298-0676	Fax (609) 324-2898	Email
School Principal	Berenice Blum-Bart		
Program Developer(s)	Berenice Blum-Bart/Dr. Sue Onaitis/Lois Popkin		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature			

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLYApproved: ☒ Yes ☐ No

County Superintendent's Signature

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**NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
1999-2000 APPLICATION**

Application Requirements:

- ◆ **RESPONSES** to the information and the statements below must be **ANONYMOUS**. No reference should be made to the names of the district or the school(s). Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements.
- ◆ **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable) and 4 and **THE NUMBER OF LINES SPECIFIED FOR RESPONSES** to the statements. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- ◆ Application must be **keyboarded on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Ten-point or larger computer font or twelve-pitch or larger typewriter font** must be used. (This sentence is in ten-point.)
- ◆ **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to the statements below must be **no more than a total of three pages**. Keyboard the statement followed by the response. Format your response to the number of lines specified.
- ◆ The information on page 4 and the keyboarded responses to statements must be printed or copied on **one side of the page**. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be printed or copied on **one side of the page**. Staple pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) and 4 and the keyboarded responses together.
- ◆ The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
- ◆ The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **November 22, 1999**, with the **Itemized List of District Applications** form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.
- ◆ **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE PROCEDURES FOR SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION MAY RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE APPLICATION.**

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	PreK Handicapped-6th	Connections: Mentoring Students
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School		Through School/Community
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School		Partnerships
<input type="checkbox"/> High School		Number of Schools with Practice 1
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		Number of Districts with Practice

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages
<input type="checkbox"/> and Counseling Programs	(family involvement and partnerships	
(services contributing to	with business, community and/or	
high student achievement)	higher education)	

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. **(Maximum of 60 lines for response)**

*The 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

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1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

The **"Connections Mentoring Program"** is a creative approach to addressing the needs of disaffected and "at risk" elementary school children with a goal of **"connecting"** them with caring community adults and staff members who serve as their mentors. Through weekly mentoring sessions, students experience emotional, social or academic support in a familiar school setting, which enhances their opportunity for school success. **"Connections"** involves community members in our school, which leads to an increased sense of partnership between the school and the community. This program was developed as a response to the negative impact of societal problems on children. These problems were reflected in our community and have impacted our students not only academically, but also socially and emotionally. Two years in the planning, this prevention program was developed to target and support children who were identified as being "at risk" by our Student Assistance Team, Core Team, Mentoring Committee, administrator, teachers and other staff members. By **"connecting"** our students to their community with the help of caring adults, we are extending the school's supportive services in keeping with our school's theme, **"Ready to Learn... One Family."**

Mentors are recruited from a variety of community organizations, including businesses, churches/synagogues, clubs, school staff and current district volunteers. Mentors are interviewed, screened and trained, and then matched to their mentee based on mutual interests, gender, personality and individual student needs. Mentors are required to attend a training session with the school counselor. They are also required to complete an application form, a confidentiality statement, a pre-evaluation survey, a mentor agreement form and a mentor interest survey. Mentees are also required to complete a pledge to enter the program with a positive attitude. Once parental permission forms are received, students and mentors are matched and the mentoring process begins. Mentors and mentees meet individually for ten half-hour sessions. At the tenth session, a determination is made by the mentee, mentor, parent and school counselor to continue or terminate a mentor/mentee relationship. If the relationship is successful, the procedure continues for two additional ten-week sessions, thereby giving a student support for approximately thirty or more weeks in a school year.

The **"Connections Mentoring Program"** has many unique features which distinguishes it from other mentoring programs. One area of difference lies in the weekly activities that directly address the student's identified need. i.e. self-esteem, self-concept, social and emotional issues. While **"Connections"** is primarily a self-esteem program, academic areas are also addressed depending on the student's identified need. Also, all mentoring sessions are scheduled during the student's lunch/recess, immediately before school begins or immediately after school hours, thereby not interfering with the student's instructional time. As a school based program, mentors are not permitted to contact mentees outside of the school environment. This program is also unique because it has been proven to work, can be implemented on a limited budget and is easily replicated. A mentoring manual and a training manual includes all the forms, time-lines and general information that is needed to easily begin the program in most school settings. For the 1998/99 school year, the **"Connections Mentoring Program"** received the **"Innovative Initiatives Award"** and grant from the New Jersey School Counselors' Association, as well as the **"Innovative Classroom Award"** and grant from the McDonald's Corporation. The monies received from these grants are being used this year for supplies and activities to further enrich the program.

The consistent showing of support by the mentors have proven to be a stable influence for many of these disaffected and "at risk" students. The nurturance and attention that these children receive prepare them to learn by strengthening their motivation and by addressing critical and emotional needs, all of which must be met before learning can occur. The final evaluation of the program, which is completed by mentors, mentees, parents and teachers produced many academic, emotional and social successes. Two social events are sponsored each year. The mentor breakfast which is held in February allows mentors to share their experiences with the administrator and school counselor. The mentor/mentee breakfast, which is the culminating activity in May, gives the mentees the opportunity to thank the mentors for their support. Certificates are awarded to the mentors by the mentees, and the mentees receive a special gift for participating in the program with a positive attitude.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Core Curriculum including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s).

Our urban school, which serves 367 students in Grades K-6, reflects the diverse population of our community. Our students represent multiple ethnic groups and nationalities. Economically, 19% of our students' families have incomes low enough to qualify their children for the USDA's **free and reduced lunch** program. Further, over 25% of our students **live with only one parent or a guardian**, rather than a two-parent family. During the 1998-1999 school year, our school had a **mobility rate** of 34%, compared with the state average of 16%, which indicates that these students' learning may be disrupted due to adjustment issues as they make the transition from one school and community to another. Further, 20% of our students are classified as **multiply handicapped** and attend special education classes.

Because of the multiple needs of our student population, and our school's long history of **faculty, parents, and community members working together** to develop and support programs that benefit all students, we believed that a mentoring program could provide much needed assistance to our students in need, while at the same time engaging a myriad of community groups and community members in our school. Our **"Connections" Mentoring Program** is designed to include all students in grades K-6 who would benefit from the support of a caring adult community member. Students may be referred to the program through our Student Assistance Team, which meets weekly to monitor and plan interventions for our at-risk students, or by the principal, school counselor, teacher, school nurse, or parent. These children have been identified due to a variety of academic, social or emotional needs, including: **low self esteem/low self-concept; lack of family structure and/or lack of family support; low motivation or under-achievement; poor study skills; and poor organization skills.**

Approximately 15% of our student population, or 55 students are "at risk" and could most benefit from the intervention of a mentor. In our **first year** of program implementation (the 1998-1999 school year), 31 students met weekly with a mentor and made significant gains in their goals. These goals include increasing self-esteem, improving school attendance, improving organizational and study skills, providing support during a life transition (divorce, death of family member, move to a new community), and engaging disaffected students in our school and local community. In the first two months of **Year Two** (1999-2000 school year), 30 students have been matched with community mentors and are progressing towards meeting their goals. While students are waiting for a mentor, the School Counselor and the Student Assistance Team monitor the progress of the "at risk" students who are waiting to be matched with a mentor and provide support to those students, as needed. The actual number of students who potentially could be matched with a community mentor is unlimited, as many students, even those not at highest risk, could benefit from the extra support of a caring adult. Our program is designed to include every student in need and is only limited by the number of community volunteers we are able to recruit, train and match.

The **"Connections" Mentoring Program** integrates many of the Core Curriculum Standards put forth by the NJ Department of Education. **The Cross-Content Workplace Standard #1** states, "All students will develop career planning and workplace readiness skills". In our community mentoring program, students develop skills such as dependability, promptness, and getting along with others, skills which are essential for workplace readiness. **The Cross-Content Workplace Standard #3**, "All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills" is comprehensively addressed by our program. Students use the community resource of their mentors to clarify their needs, work to address those needs, and evaluate the effectiveness of their solutions. **The Cross-Content Workplace Standard #4** states that "All students will demonstrate self-management skills". Our program enables students to focus on issues related to personal development, to work together cooperatively and respectfully with a community member who may be culturally and socially different from them, and to use their time efficiently and effectively. **Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and World Languages Core Content Standards** are addressed by this program, as well. Through their mentoring relationships, students learn that there may be multiple ways to solve a problem, weigh their relative merits, and select and use appropriate problem-solving strategies (**Mathematics 4.1.13**), compare the advantages and disadvantages of alternative solutions to practical problems (**Science 5.4.9**), adjust their oral communication for different purposes and audiences (**Language Arts/Literacy 3.1.2**) and communicate and interact in task-oriented and social situations (**World Languages 7.1.17**).

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

Our program has made significant gains in engaging **community members in partnership with our school** to ensure student success. Our mentors represent a cross-section of our city in terms of age, race, socioeconomic status and profession. Further, our mentors are **representatives of a variety of community organizations**: police officers, firefighters, senior citizens and retired persons, church members, small business owners and professionals, college and graduate students, military veterans, professional artists, and teachers and staff from own school community have joined forces to assist our students in need. **Parents** of students who are not in need of mentoring services have become involved in our school by becoming mentors for children who do have needs. This provides these parents an opportunity to become proactive partners in their own child's school, while at the same time helping another child. The parents' involvement with the school sends an important message to their children about the value of school/home/community partnerships. While serving as role models, our mentors embody our school theme, **"Ready to Learn... One Family"**, by creating an invaluable link with our students to their community.

Formative and summative evaluations are used as one way to assess the effectiveness of our program. Our formative evaluation criteria involves **descriptive information** about the size, growth, and maintenance of the program. This includes the number of community groups contacted to recruit mentors, the number of mentors recruited and trained, the number of students identified by the Mentoring Committee as needing a mentor, the number of students/mentors matched, and the number of weekly sessions conducted. Further, mentors complete a **Mentor Evaluation Form** after each mentoring session. This form assesses the mentor's impression of the session and gives an indication to the school counselor of the materials needed to address student goals at the following session. This **Mentor Evaluation Form** also serves as a communication vehicle between the mentor and the school counselor, so that the school counselor is quickly and easily apprised of the development of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee and their progress towards the identified goals. For our **summative evaluation**, all involved parties-mentors, students, parents and teachers- complete **pre-and post evaluation forms**. This information is used to assess program expectations, skills strengthened, development of the relationship, impact of the program on the student's behavior and academic progress, and recommendations for the program in general.

The results of our evaluation show that during Year One (1998-1999) **thirty-two matches** were made between identified students and community mentors. Of these matches, twenty-nine, or **91%** continued their relationships through the end of their mentoring contract. All of those twenty-nine matches, or **100%** were deemed **successful** by **students, mentors, parents/guardians, and teachers**. **Students** looked forward to each mentoring session and wanted to see their mentors more often. They made cards of appreciation, and told the mentors how much they appreciated them. Many students described their mentors as "listening ears" that they could talk to about almost anything. Our **mentors** expressed appreciation to the Mentoring Committee for allowing them to participate in the program and having the opportunity to have an impact on our community's children. Over **85%** of our mentors volunteered to continue mentoring in Year Two. The mentors who could not continue with the program had experienced various life-changes, such as job change, move from the area, or family illness, which precluded their further involvement in the program. All **parents/guardians** of students involved with the program reported positive changes in their children in terms of self-esteem and motivation. **Teachers** of students involved in our program reported positive changes in children's self-esteem. The children were more willing to put forth their best effort in class and were more in control of themselves. Attendance rates improved and in-class discipline issues decreased. Teachers recommended the program to parents and fellow teachers and supported students' involvement in it. In Year Two (1999-2000) thus far, **thirty** students and mentors have been matched and are meeting weekly to work together towards identified goals. We continue to evaluate the program using the methods described above.

Further, the program has made a significant difference in the way the **community** perceives its **involvement in our school** and in the way that students, families and staff perceive the **involvement of the community** in the day-to day activities of the school. Our mentors have become a woven strand in the fabric of our school community. They now see themselves as members of our school "family". Community members have become **committed, ardent supporters**, eager to participate in our school's monthly **special events with school/community themes**, such as Veterans' Day; "Read Across America Day"; "Celebrate Our Differences Day"; Geography Week; Math and Reading Focus Days, and Curriculum and Science Fairs. Members of our community now model the words of our school/community theme-**"Ready to Learn...One Family"**- in their daily activities as they volunteer in classrooms and/or share their time and talents as resource speakers for special topics.

Through our **"Connections" Mentoring Program**, our students and community members learn from one another in a co-operative setting; sharing excitement, information and cultural diversity. These heart-felt encounters produce a positive educational experience for students, staff, parents, and community as they work together toward a common goal of enhancing the lives of the children of now and the citizens of the future.